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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: COMMUNIST YOUTH LEAGUE LEADER HU CHUNHUA
DISCUSSES SOCIAL CHANGE, TIBET WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr. Reasons
1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Communist Youth League First Secretary Hu Chunhua told the Ambassador that 70-80 percent of China's rural youth seek work in urban areas and this sort of social change, plus the unprecedented number of university graduates seeking jobs, presents serious challenges. Scrutiny of new applicants for the Youth League remains strict, with "political belief" the lead criteria for admission. Hu, who speaks some Tibetan, spoke at length about his views on China's minorities and Tibet's development challenges, stating at one point that outsiders "do not influence Tibetans, they influence you." Hu said he hopes to promote increased youth exchanges with the United States and that he would host the "Yale 100" visit agreed to by President Bush and President Hu last year. End summary.

¶2. (C) Communist Youth League (CYL) First Secretary Hu Chunhua, one of China's youngest Minister-ranked officials at 43 (CYL heads have to step down at 45), discussed the challenges of his job, United States China relations and his previous work in the Tibet Autonomous Region over lunch with the Ambassador on May 10. Hu noted that he has been busy preparing activities to celebrate China Youth Day (May 4) that will continue throughout the entire month.

University Students and Employment

¶3. (C) Asked about his biggest challenge as CYL leader, Hu said he is still getting used to the job, but he cited the need to adapt to sweeping changes in society as a major challenge. The thinking and attitudes of young people have undergone huge changes. In contrast with 20 years ago, when most of China's youth stayed put in their birthplaces, estimates are that now 70-80 percent of China's rural youth seek work in urban areas. While some rural youth move to the city and stay, others work for several years in urban areas and then return to their villages. The result is that there are up to 200 million floating young people today in China.

¶4. (C) Another major change, Secretary Hu pointed out, is that university education in China has become popularized over the last twenty years. In the 1980s, there were only several tens of thousands of university students and in the 90s there were several million. Today, there are 26 million university students and tertiary education is no longer focused only on a small group of outstanding youth. While

this is positive, it also brings new problems the government needs to find new ways to address.

15. (C) Expanding employment opportunities for college graduates is a very serious problem, he noted. In the past, college graduates were guaranteed employment through the government's job allocation system. In a sign of the times, however, the last local government to guarantee employment for college graduates, the Tibet Autonomous Region Government, will, beginning this year, no longer guarantee and find jobs for its college graduates. The Tibet Government's move means that 2007 will be the first year that college graduates throughout the country will have to depend on the market to find their jobs. The CYL assists with employment prospects for college graduates through skills training programs and job information and placement activities, Secretary Hu noted.

Youth League Challenges

16. (C) Asked about the CYL's recruiting efforts and methods, Hu said that applications for CYL membership are scrutinized to determine the applicant's "political belief," skills and abilities and moral character. The process is quite selective, he said. Once accepted for membership, CYL members are obligated to participate in CYL activities, which vary in frequency and nature depending on the location of the CYL branch. For example, CYL branches in universities would have more activities, rural branches might meet every week and urban CYL branch activities might be held once a month.

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17. (C) The CYL has very active exchange programs with Japan, Russia, South and Southeast Asia and Europe, Hu stated. The CYL has also had an annual official exchange program with the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) since establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979. Secretary Hu commented that he led the CYL-ACYPL exchange delegation to the United States in 1999, when he visited Washington, Pennsylvania and Kansas. The chance to spend half a month in the United States meeting with all kinds of people and visiting sites changed his views on the United States considerably, Hu remarked. He lamented that the CYL does not have more exchange programs with the United States and commented that he senses that there is still insufficient mutual understanding between American and Chinese young people.

18. (C) The CYL has been trying to locate additional exchange counterparts in the United States, however, and is pleased to be hosting the "Yale 100" delegation. The group's visit, part of the program of exchanges agreed by President Bush and President Hu, celebrates 100 years of Yale-China connections and will meet with President Hu on May 16. Secretary Hu said he hopes he will have a chance to again visit the United States and to reinforce youth exchange programs. For example, he raised the possibility of exchanges between youth entrepreneurs and university groups or between the China Young Volunteer Association and the United States Peace Corps. The Ambassador noted the growing numbers of American students in Beijing and agreed that both sides should look for opportunities to promote more exchanges.

China's Minorities

19. (C) In response to the Ambassador's query about Hu's undergraduate study, Hu noted that he had majored

in theoretical linguistics, which is housed in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Peking University. Following that, Hu said he studied minority cultures and religion and then economics (note: at the Central Party school in the mid-90s).

¶10. (C) Expanding on the topic of minorities in Chinese history, Hu stated that throughout Chinese history, minority-area authorities had coexisted with established Han Chinese authorities. He cited the City of Beijing as an example of how modern Chinese have adopted traditions and legacies of these minorities, asserting that Beijing is really a minority, and not a traditional Han, capital city. Traditional Han capitals were established on rivers, whereas Beijing's attributes were advantageous to minorities who used it as a vantage point from which to extend their reach south or to retreat over the mountains to their familiar northern plains.

Development of Tibet

¶11. (C) Asked about his views on Tibet, Hu said that Tibet's main problem is economic development. While Tibet was "peacefully liberated" in 1951, the Chinese Government did not move to alter the "system of feudal slavery" there until 1966. Before that time, cities such as Lhasa were governed by a feudal slave system, Ali and other regions were tribal and the southern Himalaya reaches were even more primitive. It is easier to change the social system in such an environment than to immediately change the means of production, Hu said. There are over 500,000 peasants, with 300,000 of them living as nomads, in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. It is impossible for them to participate in the development of modern society through such an existence. For example, a nomad would require three yaks just to transport equipment to allow his family to watch television, including solar power batteries and panels.

¶12. (C) Current policy in Tibet is to provide nomads with land and housing to encourage them to settle, so that they can be served by local schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Of course, they insist that the Government pays for the housing and it is very difficult to divide the 800,000 square kilometers of land among these 500,000 people. The goal of the Tibetan Government is to have all nomads settled by 2010, which will mean billions of RMB in Government investment, Hu said.

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¶13. (C) The Ambassador asked whether Tibetan nomads have complained about or protested the efforts to so radically alter their traditional lifestyle. Hu denied the existence of complaints, stating that Tibetan nomads want to enjoy modern life and have their own land and cattle. In the past, however, the Government did not have sufficient capacity to provide these advantages. Adding that he is very drawn to Tibetan culture, Hu recognized that it is not easy for outsiders to change Tibet. Tibet has a long history and culture with many unique aspects. There are 29,000 government officials and 600 grassroots townships, but there are 46,000 monks and nuns and 1,700 Tibetan Buddhist religious sites. "I feel from being there that you don't influence the Tibetans, they influence you," Hu said.

Bio Notes

¶14. (C) Hu, who did not appear to speak or understand

much English, said that he had studied Tibetan and was able to hold simple conversations when he was working at the grass-roots in Tibet, but that he had forgotten much of the language after he was promoted to the TAR Government and no longer used it regularly. He mentioned several times in the conversation his keen interest in Tibetan culture and religion. Hu appeared quite fit, but said his only exercise regimen is walking.

RANDT